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ABSTRACT

This paper is a broad-based discussion of the administration of university educational administration programs from the perspective of a chairperson. The paper is divided into three parts. The first deals with the faculty, discussing considerations in the selection, socialization, and management of educational administration faculty. The second part discusses the students as organizational participants, focusing on approaches to developing rapport between the faculty and students and among the students themselves, and maintaining input from students after they have graduated. The third section considers the environment, both internal to the organization (the rest of the university) and external to it. Throughout, it is assumed that the main purposes of an educational administration program are to contribute to inquiry on educational administration and to prepare and work with individuals who can employ the processes and results of inquiry to improve schools. (TE)

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ON CHAIRING THE EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Introduction

My consideration of the administration of educational administration programs is laced with elements of personal experience and of hope, but it is also an effort to apply to that task some of what we teach others to think about and do in administering schools. Since it is geared to programs in major research universities, it might not apply very well to those in institutions that do not require extensive faculty scholarship and do not have doctoral studies.

The paper is divided into three main parts. The first deals with the faculty and the second with the students. The third considers the environment, both internal to the organization, which is to say the rest of the university, and external to it. Throughout, it is assumed that the main purposes of the kind of program under discussion are to contribute to inquiry on educational administration and to prepare and work with individuals who can employ the processes and results of inquiry to improve schools.

Faculty

The faculty is the heart and mind of the program. Hence, decisions to hire are critical ones. The program chair should see that the faculty gives serious thought to the nature of any position to be filled and to the kind of person required and it should be kept in mind that openings provide opportunities to align job descriptions with new program aims. It is up to the chair to negotiate with the dean concerning rank and resources. The higher these are, the better the chances of securing applicants with proven ability. If outstanding candidates can be identified, they should be invited to apply. At the time of the visit expectations should be made clear and the nature of the organizational culture communicated. It is an error to sugar-coat expectations or spring new ones on the recently hired. If the candidate has not been observed in national forums, a public presentation during the visit on ongoing or planned research can be instructive and also provide opportunities for student feedback. If an outstanding candidate is not found, I

believe that it is better to go without until one can be secured, rather than settle for second best.

Socialization, especially of those without prior experience in higher education, is part of the chair's job, with the help of the senior faculty. Example is an effective mode of socialization. Hence, it is important that the chair also teach, guide dissertations, and be an active scholar as well as prod senior faculty who may be underproductive.

Two areas where new faculty often need help are in thesis advisement and in knowledge of publication possibilities. It is useful to have new professors work with experienced ones on doctoral committees, but this must be carefully done since it can be extremely frustrating to a younger person highly trained in research methods to be placed in a subordinate position to a senior person who is not strong in research. Similarly, if dissertation results are to be jointly published by student and professor, if the new person has made a real contribution to the research, he or she should be included as an author.

Some younger professors have publication difficulties because they are not knowledgeable about outlets. This is easy to remedy. There are literally hundreds of journals in education and related fields. They can be found in university libraries. I have kept a file on journals since starting in the professorship and encourage young professors to do the same. One can write what one wants without a particular journal in mind, then use the file to pick an appropriate outlet and, wisdom dictates, a backup in case of rejection. Rejection can be frustrating to younger faculty. Having a backup helps by providing an immediate and optimistic response. However, criticisms made by rejecting referees should be considered; occasionally genuine improvements are proposed. It can also be useful to secure colleague reactions to the manuscript prior to initial submission. The chair should encourage this as part of a general emphasis on faculty inquiry in the program. Put another way, faculty should be talking about their

writing with each other and the students, not just with colleagues in their specialties at other institutions.

It is vital that young faculty members learn to integrate their work activities. Their teaching and research should reinforce one another and the dissertations they guide should reflect lines of inquiry they are developing with their students. The chair should facilitate this. In addition, new faculty should be given reasonably light loads and reasonably high travel and graduate assistant support. They represent an investment in the future and the idea that the newest faculty should have the heaviest loads is flawed. However, expectations should be high and those who do not meet them should be counseled to leave and opposed for tenure. They will probably be happier and better off at institutions with different expectations in any case. Those who do meet expectations should get strong support for tenure and promotion and the chair should provide advice on the presentation of the vita. Overkill or the inclusion of trivial items seems to be one of the more common errors these days.

Beyond all of these particulars, a key element in faculty socialization is the prevailing culture. In a major research university the shared commitment of this faculty should be to add to explanation and understanding within the various areas of educational administration and to communicate that by writing and in teaching. A climate of enthusiasm, colleagueship, and good humor can help sustain that commitment. However, it is up to the chair to mediate conflict if it arises and to contain and get some use from deadwood if the program has anyone in that category. Deadwood can negatively affect socialization, since those who do not produce scholarship and those who spend their time in the kind of consulting that lines their pockets but does little else, furnish the worst kinds of role models.

None of this means that the faculty has to have a common denominator other than its commitment to good scholarship and practice in educational administration. Individuality and diversity are strengths that the chair can help to foster. That the

faculty will have diverse specializations and will have graduated from a variety of good institutions is virtually a given in the better programs. Also desirable are different philosophical viewpoints, research styles, and types of prior experience. A program needs different kinds of professors. However, one oft discussed division should be avoided. That is the simplistic separation of the research and practice-oriented. Whatever the propensities of professors toward one or the other of these, neither as a pure type is of much use to the program. The practice-oriented individual who ignores the explanatory insights of theory will be little more than a story teller as a teacher and a public relations person in interactions with school administrators while the research-oriented individual who is not concerned about how schools work will seem irrelevant as a teacher and will end up with studies that are deficient because they neglect contingencies that are peculiar to educational settings. The theory-practice separation is essentially artificial. The real issue is the extent to which the experiences of practice will be reflectively informed. The proposition that they can be reflectively informed is, after all, an essential part of the rationale for administrator preparation. In any case, the chair can work against this kind of dichotomy in the faculty while nurturing diversity.

A major issue for the program chair is that of faculty participation in decision making. Faculty will want to be in on some decisions, yet will consider others an unnecessary waste of their time. The textbook cliche that people should be involved in all decisions that might affect them is no help because it covers a lot that faculty do not want to get involved with. In my experience the key is openness, an atmosphere of high information exchange, receptivity to suggestions, and no hidden agendas. I simply make judgments about what the faculty wants to be in on and act accordingly. However, in other than routine decisions, I let them know what I've done and why. This is a self-corrective procedure. If you're wrong about the desire to participate, you'll likely hear about it.

A related area is faculty participation in the extra work of the program. Reports are typically the most difficult. During the past academic year we had to prepare one for an evaluation of our doctoral program, while the year before it was one for the State on our certification programs and one for NCATE. One of the worst approaches to this kind of thing is to have a lot of meetings in which the faculty attempts to draft a document. As the most experienced faculty member in such matters, I drafted the doctoral program report. A faculty member with extensive State-level experience did both the certification and NCATE reports. He received summer session load credits for this which provided some financial incentive and graduate assistants and the secretarial staff also assisted. In each case, the faculty had an opportunity to review the drafts and make suggestions. There are two points in all this. The first is that the chair must guard faculty time and the second is that mechanisms, such as the administrative load credits for summer, need to be developed to handle such large jobs. This can be a serious problem in programs lacking extra resources, that is, in most of them.

Guarding faculty time in more routine terms means that the number of meetings of program faculty should not be excessive. However, when there are few meetings, it is necessary to keep the faculty informed of things using more informal means of communication. Another time consuming item is found in cumbersome procedures, usually in connection with students and often of little or no value. Having the whole faculty vote on admissions or having doctoral committees meet about students' course selections are examples.

The chair should avoid a petty managerial mentality regarding time. There is no necessary connection between being in the office from eight to five and working hard, nor even between hard work and good work. Faculty should be able to manage their own time and should be assessed on what they accomplish, not where or when they do the work.

Schedule and load are, of course, sensitive matters with the faculty. The educational administration program is responsible for a greater diversity of activities than is the typical university department. In addition to teaching, student advisement, dissertation guidance, and reading, research, and writing, there are such activities as internship supervision, maintaining contacts with and working with the field, and assisting students and former students with placement, to name a few. Here, the chair can strive for equity in overall load but within a framework of playing to individual faculty strengths, which means that people should do more of what they do best and less of other things when that serves program objectives. To be avoided because it increases load disproportionally is teaching courses so far from campus that extensive faculty travel is required. Also, faculty on nine month contracts should be encouraged to use most summers for scholarship and renewal. Those who do teach summer session should not be self-selected but should fit program scheduling needs. The chair can enrich the program by taking advantage of summer session to bring in outside professors and practitioners of excellent reputation. This is not as difficult to do as some might think. In recent years, we have managed to employ, in addition to two outstanding school superintendents, such stellar professors as Norman Boyan, Ross Thomas, Paula Silver, Jack Greer, and Charol Shakeshaft.

The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration recommended that the position of chair be one of leadership. Given the strong autonomy norm in the professorship, it will help if the chair is a person of high standing and high legitimacy in the faculty group. However, even that won't mean much unless he or she can do things with the faculty that make the program intellectually exciting and an interesting place to be.

Students

This section deals only with the students as organizational participants. Recruitment and admission, the curriculum, retention, and the like are important and they are concerns of the chair. However, since they are considered in many of the other papers, they are omitted here.

Many of our students, particularly the newer ones, are lightly tied to a career in educational administration and to the program. Some are taking courses because the Board of Education pays the tuition and credits bring salary increases. Some have a vague thought that they might as well be prepared in case something comes up, perhaps the retirement or demise of their principal or assistant principal. Many are taking only one or two courses in the evenings after work. As youngsters, very few of them picked educational administration as what they would like to do when they grew up.

Given all of this, systematic efforts to build program and career connections for students are highly desirable. This is one of the key tasks of the chair. A variety of things can be done, some quite easily. The materials sent to applicants can speak to both careers and the program and advisors can routinely address those topics in talking with their new student advisees. I visit our introductory course to make a presentation on the program and talk about careers in educational administration and I stress the lifelong linkages that those who complete the program and make a career in educational administration will have with Penn State. At a different level, the chair should take pains to see to it that the students are treated considerately. Students generally, and adult ones in particular, often feel a certain status degradation in their contacts with the bureaucracy of a large university. A courteous faculty can counter this and it is also important to have departmental secretaries who are friendly and helpful to students. In addition, we sometimes use graduate students in residence to talk with new or prospective students, although fielding inquiries from the latter is one of the chair's

duties. The point is simply to treat students decently. This sounds easy enough to do, but many universities have not done it very well.

An educational administration graduate students' association can be a valuable asset. Working with a faculty advisor, this group can schedule various kinds of activities ranging from the purely social to the more academically-oriented. Needless to say, the faculty should attend these events. The graduate student association and its activities are especially helpful when the student body is diverse; ours includes not only regional and in-state students, but contingents of out-of-state and foreign students as well.

The ideal situation for student involvement is full-time residence at the university with no outside employment. Having evaluated a number of programs over the years, I am convinced that a full-time residency requirement adds an element of quality that is otherwise very difficult to attain. We have such a requirement for our doctoral program which means that most of our students are in residence at one time or another since that is by far our largest program. These students are able to participate in a wide range of activities such as brown bag lectures, the various meetings sponsored by our School Study Council which bring large numbers of practicing school administrators to campus, and educational administration alumni events. The university offers numerous other opportunities as well, for instance, lectures by individuals of the caliber of Herbert A. Simon. Resident students also have opportunities to work closely with faculty on worthwhile projects, sometimes as graduate assistants, and they often attend regional or national meetings with faculty. These students frequently develop strong commitments to program purposes and contribute to their attainment.

Another type of experience that produces social glue in the student group is shared ordeal. Our written comprehensive examination for doctoral students which extends over a three day period is an example. Students typically study together for this exam and usually celebrate together when it is over. The various oral examinations and

the dissertation itself are similar experiences. All furnish stories that are repeated during student bull-sessions, but the main outcome is increased identification with the group and presumably the program, as well as pride when obstacles are successfully surmounted and good work is produced.

As a formal measure for getting input from students who have graduated, we use an Educational Administration Advisory Council. This group meets with the whole faculty annually to receive a report on program issues and to make recommendations. The Advisory Council was instrumental in helping us establish an active alumni group, something that can be important to any program.

Our alumni group usually has two activities per year. One ordinarily follows the reception, dinner, speaker format, while the other follows Willard Waller's reasoning that, "It is perhaps as a means of unifying the entire school group that athletics seems most useful from the sociological point of view" (1932:115). This activity is a brunch held before one of the Penn State football games. Current students are welcome at these events and there is a category of membership in the alumni group that allows interested non-graduates to participate. Alumni are kept informed about the program through an annual newsletter.

Obviously, such things do not happen by themselves. If there is going to be a set of meaningful activities for students and alumni, there has to be a human catalyst, and the program chair has to be that catalyst. A major issue is to have enough of the right kind of activities without having so many that they detract from the other work of the program and its faculty.

Environment

In this section the program's environment is considered. First, relations internal to the university are examined, then external ones.

Internal

The chair will be the focal point for many of the program's relationships within the university. These might begin close to home since it is not uncommon today for educational administration to be lodged in departments or divisions that include an assortment of programs, sometimes in tight and sometimes in loose confederation. The most likely combinations are with foundations of education and higher education, although there are many other possibilities. In such cases, the chair will have to protect program interests, especially in the matter of resource allocation. My experience is that divisional structures are good for weak programs because they sometimes bring the faculty into contact with productive colleagues, but bad for strong programs because they suffer a diminution of resources which often go to shore up weaker programs and they usually experience a decrease in the autonomy that a vigorous and active program requires. In any event, in a divisional type of structure, the chair will have to work closely with the head of that unit.

Lateral associations with the chairs of other programs that have common interests with educational administration are another concern that needs attention. Key relationships of a different order are with the education dean and the Graduate School. Credibility is important to all of these internal relationships. It stems, in great part, from perceptions of a vigorous, active program that is making contributions that are widely recognized.

Education deans typically have both regional and national orientations. They are sensitive to relationships with regional and state school administrators and groups and they want an educational administration program that has a strong reputation among peer institutions. Strength in both normally assists the program in competition for resources from the dean's office.

If there is a predisposition toward programs in education on the part of the Graduate School, it is usually a readiness to believe the worst. My experience is that the administration of the Graduate. School is basically interested in two things. One is

scholarship as reflected both in faculty work and in dissertations. Graduate deans may protest that they do not know much about scholarship in education (if they are physical scientists they usually include the social sciences and humanities as well), but such protests are essentially status songs. These administrators do recognize publication and major paper presentations. First rate faculty and dissertation research must, of course, be a primary objective for the chair. However, it is also part of the job to communicate accomplishments along these lines. The best faculty are usually too busy working to be concerned about this sort of thing so the chair should disseminate information to the proper source, usually a university news bureau. A few lines or a paragraph will ordinarily do. The point is that if nobody knows about what the program is accomplishing the program loses opportunities to enhance its internal credibility. A warning note is that only important contributions should be publicized; the difference between an invited address at an international conference and a talk to a local group is instantly recognizable to all.

The second thing that the Graduate School administration is interested in is standards. This, of course, refers to the academic standards to be met by the students. Graduate school personnel sometimes judge a program's standards on the basis of the number of exceptions it requests. If so, and recalling the predisposition mentioned earlier, the chair should make every effort to limit the exceptions requested for students. In this connection, the chair can try to anticipate problem areas and alert academic advisors to them. The general idea is to head off situations that feed perceptions of bent standards. While no program is going to become great as a result of effectiveness along these lines, ineffectiveness can reduce a program's credibility. These considerations are, of course, quite independent of the issue of devising appropriate standards, one of the topics covered in other papers.

The program will probably have limited connections to the university's central administration. Here only one issue is considered. In a major research university the

central administrators will want all of the Colleges including Education to be strong in scholarship. However, these administrators might well see scholarship in education, compared with that in some other disciplines, to be less essential to the university's mission and reputation. Hence, the extent to which the College is perceived as aiding the university's adaptation to its environment may be even more salient for them. For instance, an active alumni group that includes school superintendents and principals who reside in every section of the State will likely be seen as a resource by the central administration, all the more so if the institution is public.

External

In contrast with many other university departments, educational administration typically has a variety of external relationships that require the attention of the chair. The alumni have just been mentioned. Beyond the alumni, are the program's relations with the field of practice itself. Obviously, connections with the state-level school administrators' associations should be maintained and the major meetings of these groups should be covered. The same is true of such national groups as the American Association of School Administrators. It helps if the program has some sort of regularized interactions with the field beyond such typical ones as internships and placement. In our case, we have an active Study Council that has the involvement of about 150 school systems and which sponsors a wide array of activities and projects. Its executive director is a tenure line member of our faculty and the chair as well as the dean attend the meetings of its governing board.

Program faculty should also be active in organizations oriented to scholarship in educational administration. Participation in the meetings of the American Educational Research Association with special emphasis on Division A is important, especially for an institution like ours, which has produced its share of professors of educational administration. And I would be remiss if I did not add that we have found our

participation in UCEA over the years to be vitally important to our development as a program.

Many educational administration programs have significant enrollments of foreign students. When these students graduate they often quickly attain relatively high positions in their home countries. Ongoing relationships with these countries including faculty visits and exchanges can add a stimulating dimension to the program. Comparative research is a possibility as well.

Finally, most programs have some special interests and constituencies. Rural administrators (or big city ones) would be an example. For our program, American Indian educational leaders represent such a group. The chair should facilitate faculty participation in the activities of these groups, too.

Given the variety of external groups that are relevant to educational administration programs, the chair will have to orchestrate faculty participation in such a way as to distribute time and resources wisely. Clearly, excellent programs cannot be all things to all people, but in educational administration they will have to be many things to many people.

Summary and Concluding Comments

The conception of the educational administration chairperson advanced here emphasized active rather than reactive administration. It was assumed that the main purposes of an educational administration program in a major university are to add to inquiry and prepare and work with persons who can employ the processes and results of inquiry to improve schools. The chair can keep purposes in the forefront by example and by articulating a compelling vision of excellence that is consonant with them. In doing so, he or she may be something of an optimist dealing in hoped for self-fulfilling prophecies.

However, there are also numerous specific activities that can reflect purposes. Faculty selection, socialization, and reward systems are crucial ones, as is the building

of a culture that honors purpose and a climate that provides the kind of time and social support that facilitates faculty growth and productivity. The chair also has the responsibility, along with the faculty, of building career and program linkages for students, linkages which should be maintained with alumni throughout their professional lives.

Finally, there are a wide variety of relationships that an active educational administration program will have with individuals and groups both internal to the university and external to it. These relationships can, in some cases, strongly influence the future of the program for better or for worse. In other cases, the right kind of relationships can add elements of vitality that would otherwise be missing. All of the relationships have political dimensions that should not be neglected. The chair will have to be a politician. In its best sense that means working with individuals and groups to advance socially desirable aims, but with an awareness of the variety of interests and agendas that make up the mix.

The chair's position demands a lot of time and attention. To be both an administrator and a scholar will require substantial energy and effort. It can be done, but it helps if there is enthusiasm as well as savvy, which means that the chair must see the work as intrinsically worthwhile. Not in a dogmatic or overzealous way, but reflectively, in full recognition of the ubiquitous faults and failures of administration, yet alert to its potentials to nourish individual growth and serve worthy organizational purposes.

Reference

Waller, W. (1932) The sociology of teaching. New York: Wiley.